

Making the Most of the Holiday Season

Holidays act like amplifiers - exaggerating our experience of the good things and the bad things in our lives. - Renee Gilbert

Holidays can be wonderful, painful, both or anything in between. The holidays can remind us of losses, unfulfilled wishes, family problems and more. We may need to take the time to feel both the past and current feelings of sadness, disappointment, guilt or anger. We can also each individually strive to find the value in the holiday season. So . . . how do we make the most of this time of year? Here are a few ideas:



- **Become clear about what is important to you at this time of year.** It might be helping those less fortunate, reinvigorating your faith or creating and enjoying the beauty that accompanies this time of year. Take stock of what you have most enjoyed about holidays past and/or new traditions you have always wanted to start. Then, design the holiday best suited for you or you and your loved ones.
- **Keep your expectations realistic.** At this time of year, others as well as we can place many demands on us. To make the best of the holidays, pace yourself. Strive to balance commitments with enjoyment, leaving enough time for rest in between. Prioritize your activities based on what this season means to you. Making a budget for holiday expenditures ahead of time can help lessen stress (and perhaps conflict with your significant other) by staying within your means.
- **Take care of yourself if you are grieving.** Be gentle with yourself and don't push yourself to act happy just because it is the holiday season. It is normal to hurt if you have recently lost a loved one, are going through a divorce or are distant from loved ones. It is okay to do less and say "No" to invitations that seem too painful or overwhelming. Since grief is often associated with fatigue, you may need to ask for help with some of the preparations. You don't have to go it alone. Find a way to remember or honor your loved one. Perhaps light a candle or purchase or make an ornament that represents the deceased. The money you would have spent on your loved one could be used to purchase a present for someone in need or be donated to a charity in your loved one's name. There are *Surviving the Holidays Events*, which are usually held at local churches. Go to www.griefshare.org/holidays/event to find one in your area. These two-hour events feature video instruction and group discussion to help cope with the pain of grieving during the holiday season.
- **Don't abandon healthy habits.** A major stress for some people is due to overeating and drinking too much alcohol. Try eating a healthy snack before parties so you are less likely to indulge in high calorie foods. Continue your exercise regimen during this time as studies show regular exercise helps us eat less and choose healthier foods.



FROM: Your team at Alegent Creighton Health Employee Assistance Program.
We're here to assist you in handling the difficult emotions of this time of year.
For an appointment, call 402-398-5566 or 1-800-847-4975.